



# PETALUMA WETLANDS ALLIANCE

**P.O. Box 2182, Petaluma CA 94953-2182**  
**[Petalumawetlands.org](http://Petalumawetlands.org)**

## **PWA NEWSLETTER** **Spring 2020**

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### **Notes from the President**

**John Shribbs, PhD**

Greetings PWA Board, Docents, and Members

We have had a lot of activity and accomplishments since the last newsletter.

A huge loss for us was the passing of Al Hesla, our prior President, who lost his fight with cancer. Al worked hard for PWA to make us an independent nonprofit and wrote the grant proposal for our future amphitheater and kiosk. I am working with the city on these two projects and will have one bench dedicated to Al. The city council dedicated the May 2 meeting to Al. We miss his leadership. His wife Amy is planning a memorial service and will let everyone know when it happens.

Kathy Cherrstrom is the new "Information Chair" on the Board besides being the Membership Chair. She has developed a list of all that we do in order to collect volunteer hours and it is extensive. Categories include administration, school program, public education, nature walks, bird research, docent training, docent enrichment, archiving, library upkeep, Petaluma Wetlands Field Guide marketing and editing, responding to new members and donations, and restoration and maintenance of Shollenberger Park and Alman Marsh. Our newsletter contains articles by each team leader so please read each article to see what we have accomplished.

As Information Chair, Kathy is also developing a list of who is responsible for each task and function in the organization; she will be the first contact for anyone inside or outside PWA to connect a need and a responsible person. There are many activities/positions that need to be filled so many more people can take a leadership role to get even more done. We have two board positions in need of filling: PR/Outreach and Restoration and Maintenance. These functions are being filled by board members and members who are also doing other leadership roles, so we need to spread this work to more people.

Membership is up, Field Guides are continuously selling on our website and by local partners, and donations are coming in, so we are doing well financially. We are an All-Volunteer organization so we can operate on a shoestring budget compared to similar paid staff organizations. We hope to hit the 100-member mark very soon. Members get our email streams, this newsletter, and are insured under our group policy. All board members, docents, volunteers, and field workers need to be members so that our insurance policy covers them.

The school program was improved based on teacher input and has a full Spring schedule, the group doing bird surveys is growing, more volunteers are showing up to do maintenance. At the March 2 City Council Meeting, Mayor Teresa Barrett delivered a Proclamation for Petaluma Wetlands Day celebrating the many years of work by city staff, PWA, and many partner organizations.

We should all be proud of being part of PWA and what we are doing.

## **PWA Membership Report**

**Kathy Cherrstrom**

Spring is coming and what a better way to enjoy the season than becoming a member of the Petaluma Wetlands Alliance.

**Since January 2019:** Our membership has grown from 74 members to 94 members.

Education, Habitat Restoration and Board Administration combined activities:

### **Total 2019 Volunteer Hours – 4,728.5**

- Docent: 1,640.5
- Bird Research: 274
- Field Guide Preparation/Presentations: 1,584
- Habitat Restoration: 687
- Board Administration: 543

### **Total 2019 Classroom and Special Events**

- Spring – 508 Children; 98 Adults
- Fall – 128 Children; 94 Adults
- Field Guide presentations at Copperfield's; Petaluma Community Center, Petaluma Library and local schools

Members are invited to attend various PWA-sponsored events throughout the year. A few of the special events that were held in 2019 were: Christmas Bird Count, Feather Fest, and rollout of the first edition of the Petaluma Wetlands Field Guide.

## **Docent Enrichment: Integrated Vector Management and Wetlands**

Marin/Sonoma Mosquito and Vector Control District presented a program to PWA docents and friends on Tuesday evening, February 25, at the Petaluma Community Center. It was a fascinating talk, focusing on all the different services that the Vector Control District provides. Three types of mosquitoes found in this area are responsible for spreading diseases. They are also checking the parks for ticks and gathering data which will guide future plans.

The speaker was Dr. Kelly Liebman, Scientific Programs Manager for the Marin/Sonoma Mosquito and Vector Control District since 2018. She has advanced degrees in both public health and entomology. She was joined by Nizza Sequeira, Public Information Officer, and Jason Sequeira, Field Supervisor-Sonoma County.



## **Upcoming Enrichment: Tour of the Ellis Creek Water Recycling Facility (Sewage Treatment Plant): Wednesday, April 22, 10:00 am**

## **Docent Training: Four New Docents Complete Training**

Four new docents received their badges and hats: Sondra Barrett, Judy Hawkins, Dennis Redmon, and Marty Slonim.

Docent training was held on 8 consecutive Thursdays in January and February. While most sessions were at the Community Center, there were two visits to Shollenberger Park. At the first session current docents described all the things that docents do:

- School program (Helen Heal)
- Other educational programs like kids bird counts and Saturday bird walks (Sherril Nadeau)
- Park Restoration/Maintenance (John Richards)
- Bird Research (Len Nelson)
- PWA Library (Nora Pearl)

Next Nora discussed the history of Shollenberger Park and PWA.

Other sessions include a nature walk at Shollenberger Park with some discussion of history, a discussion of basic wetland science, and three sessions devoted to the school program. When the trainees tried each of the third-grade learning activities, they learned much about wetlands and bird science. In the 7<sup>th</sup> session Len Nelson gave a report on the research projects. Then the trainees visited the PWA Library at Hella Merrill's home.

Current docents were invited to join the new docents for their "graduation". In addition to getting acquainted and several short presentations, Drew Halter of the Petaluma Parks and Recreation Department presented the new docents with Certificates after thanking all the docents for their contributions.



New Docents: Marty Slonim, Sondra Barrett, Anne Taylor (trainer), Judy Hawkins, Dennis Redmon

## Petaluma Wetlands Field Guide

**Nora Pearl**

1,000 *Petaluma Wetlands Field Guides* were printed June 2019 and in just seven months almost 800 are sold or donated. What a major accomplishment!

Field guides are for sale at the following locations: Copperfield's (Petaluma and Novato), Petaluma Historical Museum, Petaluma Visitor Center, Field Works Shop, Petaluma Seed Bank, Mail Depot, Petaluma Arts Center, Novato's Wild Birds Unlimited, and our PWA website.

Monitoring field guide sales and book distribution to sales locations is a group effort. Earl Herr has been recording all placements, sales, and field guide donations for the field guide. Noellene Sommer mails out books ordered from our PWA Website. Susan Kraemer, JoAnn Freda, and Nora Pearl set up and monitor book sales at local sites.

Last summer, Petaluma Garden Club gave PWA a donation so field guides could be given to each of the twenty-seven 3rd grade teachers participating in our docent program. Field guides were also given to Petaluma and Kenilworth Junior High School libraries; field guides were also given to Casa Grande and Petaluma High School libraries.

Recently, Nora Pearl, Marian Parker, one of the two main authors, and Carol Homrighouse went to our two junior high schools and made presentations to the librarian, teachers and 7th grade students. Sixty-five students at Petaluma JHS and ninety at Kenilworth JHS enthusiastically heard about the book and

the wetlands. It felt rewarding to do outreach to this student population and share our passion for the wetlands.

We are preparing for a second printing, with minor corrections. And we plan to give Amazon a chance at finding a wider market for the field guide at the same local price. The media publicity, as well as local appeal and interest we have received from the community, have been fantastic. Your support to continue to promote the field guide is greatly appreciated!

## Updates from the Program in the Schools

**Helen Heal**

As we move into spring, we have exciting times ahead. Here are some of them:

We will be working with 16 classes from early March to mid-May. This includes a morning in the classroom and a morning at the park for each class. We have 30 docents who are dedicated and passionate about sharing their love of Shollenberger Park with these future naturalists and park stewards.

There will be other work with school children going on at the park. STRAW (Students Restoring a Watershed), a program of Point Blue, will be planting on the south berm. Children are guided in planting carefully to restore habitats, and we are excited to have them working at the park. Landpaths will also be bringing their program for children to Shollenberger this spring.

We are pleased and proud to share our Habitat poster with a wider audience. This is a poster that was carefully designed to represent four habitats that we focus on in our program in the schools. Emily Roeder, a graphic artist and docent in the school program, gathered input from a number of people to develop this poster for use in each class with our school program. You can see this poster in the 'Restoration and Maintenance' segment of this newsletter.

We are also excited to let everyone know that we are undergoing a change in leadership for the program. After having coordinated the school program for many years, I'll be leaving this leadership position. Stepping into that role will be Carol Homrighouse, who brings strong skills and knowledge from her 26 years as a science teacher and chair of the science department at the junior high level. She has already begun to have an impact through developing a mentor/buddy program for new docents. We are looking forward to all the wonderful things Carol will bring forward!

## Library Corner

**Hella Merrill**

We have new **DVDs** in our collection including "Super Hummingbirds", 60 minutes , 2016. Also our DVD, "Owl Power" includes real stories about owl's hunting habits and how their vision and hearing works. **Books** in our library include: "Rare and Elusive Birds of North America", an informative and well illustrated volume. "Braiding Sweetgrass" a classic endorsed by Elizabeth Gilbert, highlights the ancient knowledge of the indigenous people. **Activity manuals** for children are also available in our library.

To borrow books, please email Hella Merrill at [hmart2@earthlink.net](mailto:hmart2@earthlink.net).

# Restoration and Maintenance

**John Shribbs**

Our docent group has been very busy doing lots of different types of activities. See pictures below:

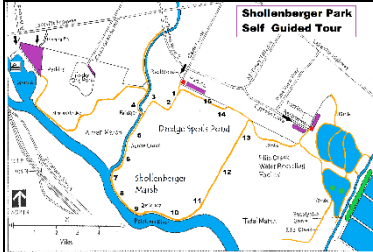
	<p>Fresh water channel near the cement tub under the entrance road of Shollenberger Park was cleared of cattails and tules by Craig and Dennis so students and public can</p>		<p>Earl and team are cutting back stray Harding Grass, hand digging the roots and turning root ball over, so roots, bulbs, and sprouts dry out. We are focusing on Alman Marsh now to reduce spread into areas that contain mostly native plants.</p>
	<p>We mow around benches and cleaned up the area around the picnic bench by the bridge over Adobe Creek.</p>		<p>Earl and team trimmed back the Lemonadeberry bushes and other bushes that were growing into the pathway.</p>
	<p>Craig and Dennis did a pickup of loose clothes and easy to bag items from the burn area in Alman Marsh. City will be sending professional cleanup crew to do the remainder.</p>		<p>Plank in Alman Marsh walkway was broken and reported through our website. John contacted City Parks Manager and it was repaired by a city crew.</p>
	<p>John R. and Craig go out weekly to check on homeless encampments and do litter cleanup.</p>	<p><b>Bird Nesting Area</b></p>  <p><b>Keep Out</b></p>	<p>Bird nesting signs are going on stakes near the bridge to keep people out of the area so swallows can make their mud nests under the bridge.</p>
<p>More benches are being cleaned and painted, many by scouts. Some of the kiosks are getting a makeover. Local business will come out to help, too.</p>		<p>Our new docent Marty came out to help John do wood replacement and repair on an old broken bench. Scout and mom helped clean and paint.</p>	
			



Working with Cindy, Parks Manager, John S. will be contacting the owners of memorial bench sites that need replacements and repair.



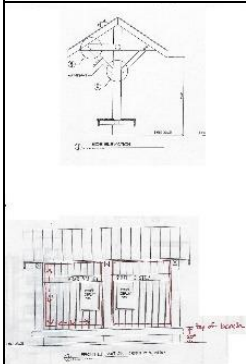
STRAW is working hard and fast to plant native species on the levee from Pt. Blue to the river with many classrooms of students. STRAW interns weed and water.



John S, updated the Shollenberger Guide with new map based on one in Field Guide and Deb is placing 3 different brochures into Shollenberger and Ellis Creek kiosks. City Recreation is helping with printing.



We will be starting up the Stinkwort removal program with mowing, cutting, and hand pulling. Let us know if you can join in.



Three Casa Grande HS student are doing their senior project on the Adobe Creek kiosk project. It will be a large kiosk with a bench facing the river. This is a prototype used at Pt. Reyes Station bus stop. Each panel is six feet wide and tall so that is a total of over 120 sq. feet of space to fill with information and art.



cage.

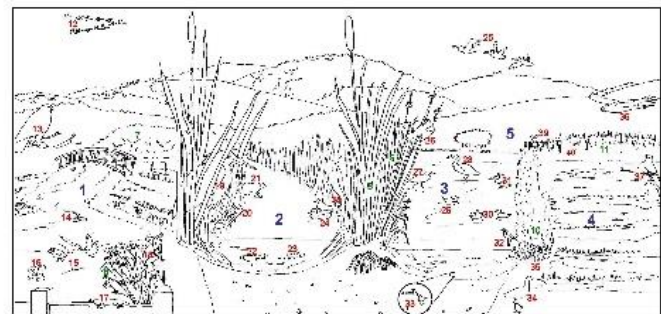
The amphitheater plan is progressing with city engineers developing a seat platform system using gabion understructure and recycled wood. Gabion is rocks in a



## Petaluma Wetlands - Shollenberger Park

Shollenberger Park is a beautiful wetland area located in the heart of the city of Petaluma. It is a great place to enjoy the outdoors and learn about the local ecosystem. The park features a variety of plants and animals, including birds, insects, and small mammals. It is a great place to take a walk, picnic, or just relax and enjoy the view.

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- |                              |                                  |                        |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Biphodon                  | 13. Red-tailed Hawk              | 28. Great Egret        |
| 2. Luteo Water Mole (Chomac) | 14. Cowbird                      | 29. Ruby Duck          |
| 3. Central Pond (Succumb)    | 15. Chf. Swallow                 | 30. American Coot      |
| 4. Salt water marsh          | 16. Gopher                       | 31. American Woodcock  |
| 5. Upland                    | 17. House Finch                  | 32. Marsh Wren         |
| 6. Lark                      | 18. Gopher Snake                 | 33. Black-necked Stilt |
| 7. Willow                    | 19. Great Blue Heron             | 34. Black-necked Stilt |
| 8. Canals                    | 20. Western Pond Turtle          | 35. Black-necked Stilt |
| 9. Lark (Tule)               | 21. Muskrat                      | 36. Black-necked Stilt |
| 10. Pigeon                   | 22. American Fish                | 37. Black-necked Stilt |
| 11. Grass                    | 23. Three Spine Stickleback Fish | 38. Black-necked Stilt |
|                              | 24. Mallard Duck                 | 39. Black-necked Stilt |
|                              | 25. White Pelican                | 40. Black-necked Stilt |
|                              | 26. Red-winged Blackbird         | 41. Black-necked Stilt |
|                              | 27. Snowy Egret                  | 42. Black-necked Stilt |

Emily's Shollenberger Park Wildlife Poster was scanned, printed, sprayed with UV protection, laminated, and hung in two kiosks, one at Sheraton entrance and the other in Shollenberger Park near bridge over Adobe Creek. Posters can be reprinted any size. If someone wants one on their wall or in their binder contact John Shribbs.

# TREE SWALLOWS

Len Nelson

## They're Baaaaack!

Spring is once again in the air and with it our flying acrobats, the **Tree Swallows**, are returning from the south to reoccupy the many swallow houses that the PWA has installed around Shollenberger and Ellis Creek. The swallows are cavity nesters but with there being so few actual trees that have cavities in them from limbs having fallen off or holes having been pecked out by woodpeckers, it behooves us to provide a substitute cavity habitats for them.

Presently, there are 28 swallow houses in the Shollenberger and, Ellis Creek wetlands open to the public. If you observe that there are many fewer houses than there They are presently stronger of them will be as they acquire a mate about the middle of



the swallow houses carefully, you will now see swallows vying to occupy them. There are far are swallows that wish to occupy one of them. staking their claims on each house and the able to defend their right to them until such time and begin the nesting process that gets serious April.

The swallows have 2 nesting periods. The first begins about the middle of April and ends mid-June. Then, if they decide to have a second nesting, it will run from early June to the end of July. On average, over the 13 years that I have monitored them, by the end of the season, about 85% of the chicks that hatched from eggs will have survived to fledge.

Last year, from the 28 houses in the areas of Ellis Creek and Shollenberger area, 195 chicks fledged from those houses with a mortality rate of but 8%.

Monitoring the houses from April to early August takes time and effort. Each house is periodically checked for the number of eggs, then chicks and problems that might arise such as a chick's dying, or ants invading the nest or a mite outbreak are addressed. The goal being to assure that the maximum number of chicks will have had the opportunity to fledge.

Please let me know if you have any questions or would like to help in this process.

## The Feather Fest

Sheryl Nadeau

The Feather Fest takes place Saturday May 16th, from 9:00 AM - noon.

All volunteers are most welcome and may contact me at [335sheryl@gmail.com](mailto:335sheryl@gmail.com).

I am looking for recruits.








**Do you love Shollenberger Park?  
Do you love the Wetlands?**

## **Become a Petaluma Wetlands Alliance DOCENT!**



### **What do docents do?**

-  **Teach 3<sup>rd</sup> graders about wetlands biomes and habitats**
-  **Lead bird walks**
-  **Restore habitats**
-  **Conduct research on birds**
-  **And much more!**

### **HOW CAN I BECOME A DOCENT?**

**Participate in our training program and observing other docents. Next training starts January, 2021, continuing for 8 consecutive Thursdays. To sign up, go to:**

<https://petalumawetlands.org/become-a-volunteer>

**For more info email: [Akt1208@bellsouth.net](mailto:Akt1208@bellsouth.net) or call: 707-774-6586**





## PWA Board of Directors

John Shribbs	President
Boyce Quinn	Vice President
Al Hesla	Past President
Jerry Taylor	Treasurer
Pat Hanson	Secretary
Anne Taylor	Docent Development
open	Publicity & Marketing
Helen Heal	Program in the Schools
John Shribbs	Electronic Media
open	Restoration/Maintenance
Len Nelson	Research
Kathy Cherrstrom	Membership/Information
Nora Pearl	Member at Large/Archivist

### Join Petaluma Wetlands Alliance – “Education and Stewardship”

Please support our free 3<sup>rd</sup> grade education program for all schools in Petaluma, free public walks and presentations, monthly bird counts, bird research, and the preservation of Shollenberger Park and Allman Marsh.

I would like to join PWA:

\_\_\_\_ \$25 Individual \_\_\_\_ \$40 Family    Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to: Petaluma Wetlands Alliance. Print this form and mail checks to:  
Petaluma Wetlands Alliance, P.O. Box 2182, Petaluma CA 94953-2182

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